

leg file HR 14592

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

June 1, 1974

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PM
action to party

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It has been called to my attention that the FY 1975 Defense Authorization bill will be considered on the floor of the Senate early next week. I am sure you appreciate that a strong U. S. military posture is absolutely essential to the success of our diplomacy abroad. It is America's strength, both economic and military, that gives weight to our words in the councils of nations. Consequently, I feel justified, as Secretary of State, in taking the liberty of stating my views on two major issues which are bound to arise during the course of the debate on the bill and which are of deep concern to our foreign policy. These are: (1) reductions in our troop deployments abroad, and (2) military assistance for South Vietnam (MASF).

While I fully appreciate the strong desire in the Congress to effect reductions in the number of U. S. military personnel and dependents now stationed abroad, I feel compelled to caution that unilateral reductions at this time could seriously undermine our efforts to achieve mutual reductions of forces between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Europe where the bulk of our overseas forces are located. As you know, we have already reduced our troops in Europe by about one-fourth, from about 400,000 in the early 1960's to about 300,000 now. During the same period, Soviet forces deployed in Eastern Europe have increased by about 100,000, from 475,000 in 1962 to 575,000 now. But more important, the U. S. troops in Western Europe constitute an absolutely essential element of NATO's military posture in the Central Region. None of our partners is in a position to replace them. I would certainly favor a more efficient utilization of the military personnel in Europe, but any reduction in our forces there should be accompanied by a commensurate reduction in Soviet forces deployed in Eastern

The Honorable
John C. Stennis,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services,
United States Senate.

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Europe. And this is precisely our objective in the MBFR negotiations which are proceeding with great care and seriousness in Vienna. Those negotiations are being pursued in the general context of our efforts, in association with our Allies, to achieve a more normal relationship with the USSR in which the massive armies that now confront each other in Central Europe would be reciprocally reduced. An unreciprocated reduction of US forces would remove Soviet incentives to negotiate seriously since they will hardly pay a price for something that is about to be handed them unilaterally by us. It would also disrupt our Alliance relationship (possibly encouraging a rash of unilateral cuts by our allies), and thus undermine the basis on which we are seeking to induce more constructive policies on the part of the USSR.

Unilateral reductions in Europe would have equally serious consequences in the West. You and your colleagues are sufficiently aware of the stress in our relationships with Western Europe over the past eight months. Our objective throughout this period has been to build toward a closer understanding with our allies and friends of our shared objectives, and to enhance the practice of frank and timely consultation. The changes in governments in Western Europe in the very recent past make it important to avoid at all costs abrupt and destabilizing actions by us. Continuity and stability in the Allied defense posture are essential to maintaining Allied security, which is the indispensable basis for pursuit of our policy of detente. There is no question in my mind that a reduction in United States forces in Europe would be destabilizing, and would afford distinct political advantages to potential adversaries.

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Our troop deployments in Asia and the Western Pacific, which are now a fraction of what they were only a few years ago at the height of the Vietnam conflict, constitute a very tangible measure of our interest in the security of our friends and allies in that region of the world. But any major reductions in U. S. forces in South Korea, Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines could seriously jeopardize our efforts to achieve a more permanent structure of peace in that area. Such reductions can be safely made only when we have firm evidence of improved relations among the contending nations in the region. Meanwhile, we will continue to make reductions in our forces in Thailand as the situation in Southeast Asia permits.

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With regard to South Vietnam, I have a very personal sense of obligation to do everything I can to make good on our moral commitment to assist that nation in its survival as an independent state. The Administration's request for \$1.6 billion in military assistance was made because of our conviction that the survival of South Vietnam is indispensable to the creation of an enduring structure of peace in Southeast Asia. Without our military assistance South Vietnam's ability to resist communist military pressures, fueled by an extensive flow of arms and supplies from the North, would be critically endangered.

I recognize that the House has already substantially reduced the Administration's request and that some members of the Senate would favor even a larger reduction. But I would be remiss in my duty as Secretary of State if I did not urge upon you the essentiality of supporting the Administration's request. Here, as in Europe, we must not lose sight of our longer range objective, and that is not just a reduction in the level of hostilities but more importantly the creation in Southeast Asia of an environment conducive to enduring peace and reconstruction. This fundamental humanitarian goal not only deserves the wholehearted support of all the people in the area, but also of the American people whose devotion to peace and progress throughout the world has been convincingly demonstrated over the years. In South Vietnam we have made an enormous investment in lives and dollars on behalf of the survival of that country and an enduring peace in Southeast Asia. We have made marked progress toward these goals. I am convinced that our willingness to contribute a substantial level of military assistance to South Vietnam in the coming fiscal year will bring stable peace closer and enable us to reduce our assistance progressively over the following years.

Best regards,

/s/ Henry A. Kissinger

Henry A. Kissinger